

**The Nature Conservancy
Comments on the
Proposed Framework for Establishing a Missouri River Implementation
Committee**

We want to thank the Federal Working Group (FWG) for this opportunity to provide comments on the Proposed Framework for Establishing a Missouri River Implementation Committee (MRRIC).

The Nature Conservancy is an international, non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of biological diversity. Our mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. The Conservancy has more than 1,000,000 individual members and 1,900 corporate associates. We have programs in all 50 states and in 27 foreign countries. We have protected nearly 15 million acres in the United States and Canada and more than 102 million acres with local partner organizations globally.

The Conservancy's conservation programs are characterized by sound science and strong partnerships with public and private entities to achieve lasting and tangible results. We have long recognized the importance of adaptive, inter-disciplinary, science-based processes to achieving the effective conservation of biodiversity and believe the proposed framework outlines satisfactory steps to begin a collaborative forum in the basin.

As noted in the Executive Summary of the Proposed Framework, "Recovery of the federally listed species in the Missouri River basin and the ecosystem upon which they depend will require many actions." It is important these actions are prioritized as mentioned later in the framework as a focus of the MRRIC. To adequately prioritize actions for species and system recovery the MRRIC must take into account the life histories (particularly the geographic scope involved) of the listed species, and the impacts of the Missouri River and basin have on other ecosystems.

It is noted in the Proposed Framework "the MRRIC is not intended to address all issues or concerns within the basin and is limited in its scope - ." We believe it is important this scope does exclude the MRRIC from awareness and consideration of actions taken in and conditions of the other ecosystems the listed species also depend on. Concurrently, recognition of the vital roles the Missouri River and basin play in

the ecological integrity of the other ecosystems linked to it must be taken into consideration. Not allowing the MRRIC to evaluate realities from outside the basin will ultimately limit wise recovery actions within the basin.

In summary, The Nature Conservancy is encouraged by efforts toward the formation of a MRRIC and believes an adaptive, inter-disciplinary, science-based process is critical to recovering and conserving the plants animals and natural communities dependent on this river, as well as meeting the future social and economic needs of the people who live along it. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, please contact Jason Skold, Missouri River Program Manager at 402-342-0282 ext.1006.